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Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 6 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Madagascar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to two letters dated 22 September 2010 and 27 September 2010, respectively, communicating to you the decision of the delegation of Madagascar to decline the podium during the general debate of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals and during the general debate at the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

As mentioned in the above-mentioned letters, this decision has been taken on a sovereign and voluntary basis, not only with a view to preventing useless, counterproductive statements but also in order to preserve the peaceful unfolding of the work of the General Assembly.

On behalf of my Government, I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annexes (texts of the statements which the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar would have delivered on 22 September 2010 and 29 September 2010) as documents of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 8.

(*Signed*) Zina **Andrianarivelo-Razafy**
Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the letter dated 6 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Madagascar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (New York, 22 September 2010)

On behalf of the Government of Madagascar and the Malagasy delegation, allow me to express our heartfelt thanks for the invitation to take part in this historic occasion, to which the Malagasy people attach so much importance. My delegation would also like to offer our sincere and warm congratulations on your election as Co-Chairs of the High-level Meeting.

In adopting the Millennium Declaration in 2000, we have influenced the history of our Organization through our determination and commitment to make our planet a better place by means of the goals we have set for the benefit of hundreds of millions of human beings.

Accordingly, allow me once again to express my Government's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to mobilize the necessary resources for the holding of this meeting, whose success is vital for the well-being of our people now and in future generations.

Madagascar welcomes the February 2010 report of the Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals (A/64/665), entitled "Keeping the promise", and the negotiation process leading to the Final Declaration of the 2010 High-level Meeting, which my delegation fully supports.

Despite these efforts, however, and with only five years to go before the target date for the achievement of the Goals, the complex and cross-cutting nature of the world crisis is becoming increasingly apparent, owing to, among other things, the 2007-2010 recession in the wake of the financial crisis — which has affected nearly all the countries of the world — and the ever-multiplying political crises in Africa. These situations run the risk of seriously undermining the progress already made. We must therefore join forces to double or even triple our efforts to achieve the Goals, aiming to eliminate poverty, hunger, sickness and maternal and infant mortality, in accordance with the Secretary-General's ardent wish to make this summit meeting a crucial opportunity for promoting the Goals.

We bear witness daily to the continued degradation of our environment. The proliferation of the effects of climate change on our planet, our peoples and our economies is a warning signal to which we must respond without delay. Strengthened by the growing interdependence of our States and communities, these scourges are a constant source of concern and require us to take rapid, effective and sustainable action.

We welcome the progress made and the further steps taken to achieve the eight Goals we have set for ourselves. Unfortunately, however, we have a long way to go, and time is not on our side. Universal mobilization, accompanied by a firm political will and the concrete realization of existing commitments, is therefore essential.

Development and security are inseparable, and they must be seen as long-term strategies. They help to combat the existing poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation that affect millions of people and constantly threaten human security. They also play a decisive role in building the capacity of States that have become too weak to deal with the various challenges they face.

Madagascar is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, not only because of its persistent economic weakness but also owing to its geographical situation, which constantly exposes it to climate hazards. Nonetheless, I should like to announce that the Malagasy Government has spared no efforts to fulfil its commitments. In particular, it has made progress in the area of health.

As a result of the drastic actions and concrete measures it has taken, Madagascar has seen a considerable reduction in infant and child mortality.

I also draw your attention to the HIV/AIDS situation in Madagascar, where the prevalence rate was 0.1 per cent in 2007 and remains low. Madagascar is redoubling its efforts, however, to combat this disease, and it has joined various regional and international initiatives in that regard.

As you know, Madagascar has a rich and unique biodiversity, making it one of the countries with the highest rates of endemicity. Protection of the environment is therefore one of the Malagasy Government's highest priorities. The proportion of forest-covered land has tended to stabilize in the past few years. Accordingly, the current environment programme is emphasizing the creation of 2.65 million hectares of protected areas, which would ultimately constitute 10 per cent of the country's surface and would reduce deforestation by 75 per cent.

Education is equally important, as it is the cornerstone for the success of future generations. Madagascar has witnessed significant progress in this area; its priorities include literacy training, training of adults and teachers in the required competencies and determining appropriate guidelines for the country's situation.

In order to eliminate poverty and hunger or cut it in half in accordance with Goal 1, we have strengthened food security by adopting a national nutrition policy (2005-2009) and a national health policy, with special coverage for acute malnutrition since 2008. The arm circumference measurement programme and the accelerated reduction of malnutrition in the south-eastern region of the country, together with the establishment of nutrition centres and the promotion of infant feeding, are part of this coverage. We need to take further steps, however, to extend these programmes to other areas in the short term and then, in the longer term, ensure that the people as a whole become responsible for their own food security. To that end, the funding allocated to microprojects in the agro-food sector must be increased.

As for gender equality and the empowerment of women, a national Gender and Development Action Plan (PANAGED) was adopted in 2003, and a number of measures known as *miralenta* (equality) in the Malagasy language have been taken in order to promote gender equality before the law and in various legal situations. Subsequently, an employment policy act was adopted in 2005 to fight discrimination and promote the hiring and occupational training of women. Tangible results can already be seen, including the establishment of networks of women leaders in the country's 22 regions.

With the help of multilateral cooperation, Madagascar has been able to reduce maternal and infant mortality by providing prenatal and post-natal care for women, financed by an "equity fund" set up in all hospital centres. The health of the population in general has benefited from national measures to combat malaria and other diseases, including a vaccination campaign, easy access to basic health centres and the distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

As you can see, many kinds of advances have been made. Nonetheless, Madagascar is far from meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

A dynamic, effective and targeted partnership must be an integral part of the essential tools for achieving the Goals. Madagascar therefore calls on its partners to keep their commitments and mobilize more resources in order to enable all countries, especially the African developing countries, to reach the Goals.

To that end, it would be useful to strengthen innovative financing mechanisms, such as carbon trading, in order to encourage societal and environmental responsibility in the economic field.

Resolved to help bring about a better future for all, Madagascar supports the positions of the small island developing States and the least developed countries with respect to cooperation with the United Nations system.

We also support the recommendations of the Group of 77 and China on capacity-building, increased technical and financial assistance and technology transfer. The new information and communications technologies are of great value in promoting democracy, development and security. Moreover, they may considerably facilitate public participation in political affairs and influence the younger generation.

Having come two thirds of the way, we have a long road ahead in terms of investment and commitments. But if we establish a real partnership, the distance will seem short, the time will pass quickly and our Goals will be achieved. A better world awaits us in 2015, where we will enjoy peace based on world solidarity. Let us take up the challenge and devote ourselves squarely and optimistically to that goal.

Annex II to the letter dated 6 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Madagascar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Hippolyte Rarison Ramaroson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar at the General Debate of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly (New York, 29 September 2010)

It is a pleasure to speak from the podium of the United Nations and to make a contribution to the discussions and consultations at this sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Allow me first of all to express my thanks to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for the manner in which he conducted the work of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, which allowed us to make progress on various relevant topics useful for the development of all of humanity.

Allow me also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election as President of the sixty-fifth session. I am certain that our Assembly will adopt relevant resolutions and decisions under his clear-sighted leadership.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of our Organization, for his unflagging determination to make it the pillar and foundation of a global structure with a human face, a universal system in which all, without exception, are taken into account and feel that they are given consideration.

As we all know, the United Nations provides the ideal setting to exchange our respective experiences and to maintain the momentum of our solidarity.

Therefore, the theme chosen for this session, "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance", is opportune. Indeed, it is more important than ever to restore our Organization to a central leadership role in addressing the numerous challenges facing the world.

We can make a start through better representation of the major geopolitical, demographic and geo-economic groups in the decision-making bodies of international organizations, beginning with the United Nations, which should be the central pillar of the system of global governance.

The current international environment is characterized by persistent global crises. The ongoing consequences of the international economic and financial crisis are amplified for the developing countries. What is more, threats to international peace and security represent a major global problem, not to mention environmental and development challenges.

Madagascar believes that the central role of the United Nations in seeking viable solutions to the international economic and financial crisis that continues to affect the lives of millions of people in the world, especially the most vulnerable, must be reaffirmed.

The implementation of these solutions requires concerted and coordinated action by the international community, with the leadership of our Organization.

Our actions should be focused on national and international good governance, including financial sector reform through regulation of financial markets and combating corruption. It is high time for increased and more effective participation of developing countries in the decision-making process within the Bretton Woods institutions.

The economic and financial crises have direct repercussions on development financing, which is already subject to a chronic lack of resources for development.

In this regard, Madagascar recognizes that first and foremost, each country is responsible for its own economic and social development, and thus the necessity of national appropriations for capacity-building to attack economic and social issues with a direct impact on the people.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the promises and commitments regarding official development assistance, made at Monterrey and at the other summits, are far from being honoured. Furthermore, we appeal for the political will of all in reaching a swift conclusion of the Doha Round.

Madagascar welcomes the efforts and initiatives undertaken to find innovative sources of development financing. However, we are still far from the desired objectives, and the international community must further mobilize with a view to finding the necessary funds for greater aid predictability and sustainability.

Africa has borne the brunt of the successive crises of recent years. The African continent remains highly vulnerable and is far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I do not want to dwell excessively on the challenges, but allow me to share a few thoughts on the situation in Africa.

African Heads of State have been relentless in stressing the central role of agriculture in combating poverty and food insecurity in Africa. They have, inter alia, emphasized the need to extend arable land and modernize agriculture.

Seeking appropriate solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change on African agriculture in particular is vital in order to alleviate the food crisis.

On another level, energy is at the heart of development and no country can achieve economic independence without a well-defined energy policy. To that end, Madagascar plans to promote an integrated policy of available energy sources (renewable energy, exploitation of oil resources) in order to reduce energy dependence.

It goes without saying that improvement in basic socio-economic infrastructure, sanitation and access to drinking water, good water management, access to health-care services and quality education constitute the foundations of sustainable development.

For some time, there has been a development framework for the African countries outlining the needs and priorities based on the realities of the continent. The implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development strategic framework requires not only the efforts of the African countries themselves but also the support of the international community.

While African countries have made commitments to ensure their development, for example allocating at least 10 per cent of their budgets to agriculture, it must be acknowledged that Africa remains disadvantaged as far as official development

assistance is concerned. Therefore we have no choice but to appeal to the international community to honour its commitments if we really want Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Environmental problems, which generally undermine global development efforts, and particularly in Africa, also require our Organization's leadership.

On the eve of the Cancun Conference on climate change, can we still afford to wait? Environmental degradation will not wait for us to be ready to deal with it.

Far from it, it is accelerating and brings in its wake lethal devastation and mass disruptions for both peoples and economies. The time for indecision and speeches is over, because time is running out.

There is no need to emphasize that climate change helps to aggravate the phenomenon of desertification and drought that lead to food insecurity in Madagascar, especially in the southern part of the island.

Each year, Madagascar falls victim to natural disasters destroying basic infrastructure and agricultural production among other things. The Malagasy Government has undertaken efforts in early warning and risk reduction and management, in cooperation with the regional and subregional organizations of which the country is a member. Furthermore, actions have been taken to promote capacity-building at both the local and national levels.

The major challenge to developing countries definitely remains the correlation among development, environmental protection and rational management of natural resources.

The principles and objectives of the United Nations on questions relating to international peace and security, as stipulated in the Charter at its creation, remain valid.

The international community is more active than ever on the question of disarmament in all its aspects. Numerous international summits and meetings have been devoted to it in order to find appropriate solutions.

Furthermore, the fight against terrorism requires concerted action and effective cooperation of all Member States at all levels with the goal of maintaining international peace and security. Terrorism has devastating effects, most especially in developing countries; maritime piracy in the Horn of Africa and its ramifications on the Indian Ocean is just one example, not to mention other subversive activities destabilizing the countries of the region, including drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Is there any need to recall that poverty, if not the incubator, is one of the root causes of terrorism?

I call on all of us here, representatives of the international community, to take concerted action to strengthen regional and international cooperation for a coordinated response to these scourges.

In this Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, it seems more essential than ever to support by all available means the creation or development of telecommunications and transportation infrastructure in developing countries, as well as facilitating access for all to information and new information and communications technologies. Only intercultural exchange and dialogue can reduce or even eliminate mutual misunderstandings and exclusion.

Along the same lines, I believe that it would be wise and fruitful to promote intercultural dialogue in all areas of international life, at a specific moment when we are seeking new models in order to face current global crises. For culture is the particular mark that each human society makes in all the facets of its existence: political, social, economic, etc. And innovations are borne out of encounters and fusion among the elements of our common heritage of cultural diversity.

I cannot conclude without expressing my warm thanks to all the international and regional organizations for their commendable and determined commitment to the resolution of the Malagasy political crisis through the International Contact Group. Currently, the process has entered a new and decisive phase where all the people of Madagascar must play their roles to the fullest extent: over a hundred political parties and associations as well as all civil society organizations and citizens, through their representatives, have come to agreement in multiple large-scale meetings, in particular during a national conference from 13 to 18 September 2010. The goal is to hold credible elections that are accepted by all the Malagasy people and recognized by the international community before the end of the first half of 2011, with a view to the establishment of a new Republic meeting the aspirations of the people and democratic norms.

Support and assistance from bilateral and multilateral partners for these internal Malagasy initiatives is earnestly requested, for Madagascar cannot wait any longer, and the 20 million Malagasy citizens, in particular the most vulnerable groups in society, lost a great deal during the 18 months of the crisis and could lose heart if they unfortunately had to wait even longer. I am sure that all of you here today, under the auspices of our common Organization, will be there for Madagascar as it traverses an obstacle course towards a better and more prosperous future.

It is my hope that more mutually beneficial relationships will be created among all the countries of the world and the United Nations for a safer, more just and peaceful world.